

*Government Orders*

than the social security net, is a day you have the formula out of balance.

To answer my friend from St. Boniface, if I disagree with some of the people in the Reform Party, since he mentioned them, it is on that question of balance. I know the member does not want to hear this, but he is going to hear it anyway, and I am going to do it very quickly because my time is up. I say to them, if you talk to them as really free voters rather than as part of a monolithic host which they like to pretend sometimes, you will find that in their heart of hearts—yes, they all have hearts, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that—they really like those people, those Canadians, to have some work. They are not really as Scrooge-like as they sound from time to time.

**Mr. Cliff Breitzkreuz (Yellowhead):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to offer a few comments on Bill C-17, confining my remarks mostly to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

My colleague from Lethbridge spoke eloquently on the measures we support in Bill C-17 and outlined the steps we would take to put our country's economic house in order.

• (1330)

It has been said countless times in this House since January and it bears repeating, that Canada has a spending problem and not a revenue problem. Canada's debt is rising and will continue to rise at a significant rate as long as federal governments keep trying to push through omnibus bills like Bill C-17, the budget implementation act. By this time next year Canada's debt load will be approaching \$550 billion. The debt is growing by \$1,473 per second. That means every man, woman and child in this country is in hock for over \$20,000.

The fact that this federal government is pushing through omnibus Bill C-17 which includes authorizing the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to borrow money shows its lack of regard for the taxpayers of this country. I submit that the CBC is an ill-run crown corporation and should undergo a thorough review. It is a bottomless money pit. Taxpayers are sick and tired of having to support what seems to be a planned to lose failure.

Bill C-17 will give the CBC the authority to borrow \$25 million so it can operate with more businesslike flexibility. This is akin to not only letting the fox into the chicken house but also to locking the door and throwing away the key.

I am very sceptical when the government assumes that borrowing \$25 million would achieve more efficient management practices. Companies are in the business to offer services, sell products and to make money, not to borrow to go even deeper into the red. The Canadian taxpayer is already on the hook for \$1.1 billion per year for the operation of the CBC. If this crown corporation cannot achieve more businesslike flexibility with \$1.1 billion in appropriations from Canadian taxpay-

ers, what possible good will come of another \$25 million of borrowed money?

The track record of crown corporations is not good. They are endless black holes where the money goes in rarely to be seen again. The federal government should not be competing with the private sector, especially when the private sector is doing the job. Recent history is littered with examples of defunct, broken down crown corporations.

Peter Foster, who penned the book *Self-serve: How Petrocan Pumped Canadians Dry*, has followed the Petro-Canada fiasco very closely. He calculates that Petro-Canada has amassed a total debt of over \$15 billion which of course is on the backs of the Canadian taxpayer.

Another debacle of the federal government is its involvement in the Hibernia project. Admittedly Hibernia was initiated by the former government, but it was a former Liberal government that caused the Petro-Canada fiasco. The government has an 8.5 per cent stake in the Hibernia project which has cost taxpayers about \$3 billion in loans and grants. Just last week it was confirmed that Hibernia has a cost overrun of \$1 billion.

When will the meddling stop? When will the federal government learn that crown corporations are generally a detriment to the Canadian taxpayer? It seems few lessons have been learned for the near future.

Like most crown corporations the CBC is not like a private sector business and is incapable of acting as such. The CBC has no shareholders or customers in the normal sense to answer to. There is little will to strive for efficiency because there is no bottom line to meet. Bill C-17 will further ensure that the CBC will be able to operate without worrying about such minor things as turning a profit and generating revenue.

Government members keep harping about their red book: "Read the red book. It is in the red book. We are keeping our promises". That is often the type of rhetoric we hear from across the floor, but it appears the federal government has not quite been keeping its promises. The red book states that the Liberals will "exercise unwavering discipline in controlling federal spending and will re-order current spending priorities to make sure that maximum return is obtained on each investment".

• (1335)

Bill C-17 goes against what the Liberals promised to Canadians via the red book. There is no unwavering discipline in controlling federal spending. In fact, the portion of Bill C-17 dealing with the CBC states that the CBC may be allowed to borrow an amount even greater than \$25 million, with parliamentary approval. What is to stop the government allowing to lend \$50 million, \$150 million, or even more to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation? If the CBC is to become a viable enterprise it must stop trying to borrow its way to prosperity.